

1.0 | Introduction



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► 1.1 A Snapshot of the Region

York Region and its nine local municipalities are part of a broader economic region where over 6 million people live, work and play. Over one million people in York Region, from a variety of cultural backgrounds, live across 1,776 square kilometres (686 square miles) stretching from Steeles Avenue in the south to Lake Simcoe and the Holland Marsh in the north.

York Region's diverse communities, emerging urban centres, competitive industries, attractive natural environment, and strategic location in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area continue to attract dynamic growth. By 2031, it is anticipated that York Region will reach 1.5 million residents, 780,000 jobs, and 510,000 households.

Originally a First Nations hunting, gathering and foraging society, York Region evolved into an agricultural-based economy and has, over time, attracted a broad spectrum of business activity and over 29,000 businesses. Growth in recent years has seen an increase in service-oriented employment and the emergence of a strong knowledge-based economy.

Sixty-nine per cent of York Region's land base is within the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Greenbelt. Woodlands cover more than 23 per cent of the Region and an extensive network of trails provide quality outdoor recreation for walking and cycling. The Region also has 32 small lakes and over 50 kilometres of shoreline on Lake Simcoe.

York Region's natural beauty is complemented by a rich cultural heritage, including First Nations and Métis heritage sites, art galleries, museums and wineries. The Region's agricultural industry produces a wide-variety of locally-grown fruit, vegetables, livestock, and dairy products.

The 1994 Regional Official Plan defined the structure of York Region which was rooted in the Region's Vision 2026: Creating Strong, Caring, Safe Communities. The Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt legislation further defined the Region by protecting 69 per cent of its land base. It is now time to take the next step by refocusing on city building, maintaining a dynamic economy, providing integrated and responsive human services and enhancing the Regional Greenlands System.

York Region's Vision 2026: Creating Strong, Caring, Safe Communities Goal Areas

- Quality Communities for a Diverse Population
- Enhanced Environment, Heritage and Culture
- A Vibrant Economy
- Responding to the Needs of Our Residents
- Housing Choices for Our Residents
- Managed and Balanced Growth
- Infrastructure for a Growing Region
- Engaged Communities and a Responsive Region



► 1.2 Towards a Sustainable Region

Sustainability is the lens through which York Region formulates, enhances and implements policy. The award-winning York Region Sustainability Strategy: Towards a Sustainable Region, provides a long term framework for making smarter decisions about all municipal responsibilities that fully evaluates economic, environmental and community considerations. This “triple bottom line approach” will be used to evaluate a number of key emerging trends facing York Region, including:

- an aging and diverse society
- an urbanizing region defined by vibrant centres
- the impact of the built environment on social cohesion among and within communities
- climate change, energy conservation and renewable sources of energy
- societal health issues such as obesity, mental illnesses, and cardiovascular and respiratory diseases

Sustainable Communities

- *Promote active lifestyles*
- *Meet the diverse needs of residents of all ages, cultures, and abilities*
- *Include a diversity of jobs and affordable housing*
- *Provide quality schools, public spaces, recreation facilities and other amenities*
- *Achieve the highest standard in urban design and green building*
- *Provide safe, accessible mobility systems that prioritize pedestrian and cycling connections, public transit and streets* ■■■

This Official Plan represents York Region’s ongoing collaboration with its partners and stakeholders to rethink the way communities are designed, serviced and supported. Key elements of this Plan include:

1. City building, focusing on Regional Centres and Corridors and including innovation in urban design and green building.
2. A minimum of 40 per cent residential intensification within the built-up area.
3. New community areas, designed to a higher standard that includes requirements for sustainable buildings, water and energy management, public spaces, mixed-use, compact development, and urban design.
4. The protection of employment lands from non-employment uses.
5. Promotion of a well-designed and intensified built form for new commercial, industrial and institutional developments.
6. Updated York Region Master Plans for transportation and transit, water and wastewater, and pedestrian and cycling.
7. Enhanced mobility systems using a “people and transit first approach” to connect land use and transportation planning.
8. Progressively higher standards in energy and water efficiency, renewable energy systems and waste reduction.



9. Urban development and infrastructure projects that contribute enhancements to the Regional Greenlands System.
10. A natural heritage legacy based on a linked and enhanced Regional Greenlands System.
11. A minimum 25 per cent affordable new housing units.
12. A full-cost accounting approach to financial management that considers the economic, environmental and social costs.
13. Protection of the rural and agricultural countryside.

The policies in this Plan will strengthen the connections between the natural and built environment, job opportunities, human services, transportation, public health and fiscal capacity. Making these connections will also foster citizen participation in the economic, social and cultural development of the Region's communities.

York Region Triple Bottom line Objectives


Sustainable Natural Environment:

- Identify, protect and enhance the Regional Greenlands System
- Ensure a healthy system, rich in native biodiversity
- Ensure that significant environmental features and functions are protected and natural hazards avoided
- Integrate with infrastructure delivery and urban development

Healthy Communities:

- Promote a mix and range of housing types
- Promote the health and well-being of residents in accessible and safe communities
- Work with partners to provide adequate and quality human services
- Recognize, conserve and promote cultural heritage
- Improve air quality, the health of communities and address climate change

Economic Vitality:

- Balance job creation with population growth
- Encourage entrepreneurship
- Retain and attract highly skilled labour
- Promote economic diversity and resilience
- Deliver context sensitive and efficient infrastructure 



▶ 1.3 The Provincial Context

Since 2001, the Province of Ontario has approved several key plans that affect where and how York Region and other municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe will grow.

The Province enacted the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan in 2002. The Plan protects, restores and enhances the Oak Ridges Moraine's ecological and hydrological features and functions. Approximately 31 per cent of York Region is within the Oak Ridges Moraine.

In 2005, the Greenbelt Plan, affecting an additional 38 per cent of the Region, was approved by the Province. The Greenbelt Plan identifies where urban development should not occur and provides permanent protection for the agricultural land base and ecological features and functions.



In 2006, the Province enacted Places to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and the Places to Grow Act, 2005, which guide decisions on a wide range of issues, including transportation, infrastructure and land use planning, urban form, housing, natural heritage and resource protection in the interest of promoting economic prosperity.

In 2009, the Province approved the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan which identifies measures required to restore the ecological health of Lake Simcoe. Provisions of the Plan will impact the way future growth occurs in the watershed.

As well, the Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan: The Big Move is the 25-year blueprint to achieve a transportation system for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area that is effective, integrated and multi-modal. The Province's Parkway Belt West Plan also continues to apply within York Region wherein the Region and its municipalities continue to implement provincial policy regarding the protection of major linear infrastructure (such as transportation, power dissemination, and communications) and natural heritage corridors (such as major river valleys).

Under the Planning Act, the Province is the approval authority for this Regional Official Plan. Amendments to this Plan following the approval of the parent document may be exempt from provincial approval. The Province is also a major funding contributor in the Region's infrastructure investments and human services programs. During the planning horizon of this Plan, the Province and the Region will work together to ensure successful implementation of the governing Provincial Plans and legislation.

All planning decisions under the York Region Official Plan shall conform with provincial plans and be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement.

The Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe together with the Provincial Policy Statement, the Greenbelt Plan, and other provincial plans provide a policy framework and direction that York Region and its municipalities use to formulate new plans to accommodate additional population and employment growth to 2031 in more compact, complete communities and protect and enhance the environment and strengthen the economy. Future updates of the Growth Plan will extend the planning horizon beyond the 2031 period.

In order to accommodate future growth beyond the planning horizon, York Region may redesignate additional rural and agricultural lands outside of the Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan Area for urban uses through Regional Official Plan Amendments, provided the redesignation meets the tests and policies of the Growth Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement and is undertaken through a Regional municipal comprehensive review of the York Region Official Plan. The Growth Plan outlines a series of tests and criteria to ensure expansions occur when necessary and where most appropriate, and in a way that ensures that infrastructure is in place and the natural environment is protected.



Key Provincial Initiatives:

- *The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan*
- *The Greenbelt Plan*
- *Places to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*
- *The Lake Simcoe Protection Plan*
- *Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan: The Big Move*
- *The Clean Water Act, 2006*
- *The Parkway Belt West Plan*
- *The Green Energy Act, 2009*
- *The Provincial Policy Statement* ■■■

► 1.4 Purpose and Organization

The policies of this Plan will guide economic, environmental and community building decisions to manage growth. A series of regional strategies, plans and guidelines will support and implement the policies in this Plan.

The policies in this Plan will help co-ordinate and set the stage for more detailed planning by local municipalities. This Plan will also provide a framework for co-ordinated planning with adjacent municipalities, as well as with other jurisdictions. These efforts can provide certainty on how to approach environmental, economic and community issues when creating sustainable communities.

All the policies in this Plan must be considered together to determine conformity. Individual policies should not be read or interpreted in isolation. The Plan **is intended to be read in its entirety** and the relevant policies are to be applied to each situation.

The goals, objectives, policies, Tables 1, 2 and 3, Definitions and Maps constitute the York Region Official Plan. Chapter 1, Figures 1, 2 and 3, other tables, graphics, text preceded by a blue vertical bar and introductory text are intended to be illustrative and are provided for information only. ***Italicised*** terms contained in this Plan are included in the definition section.

This Plan consists of three main sections: Towards a Sustainable Region, Growth Management and Implementation.

How to Read this Plan

Functional Part of the Plan

Goals; Objectives; Policies; Tables 1, 2 and 3; Definitions, Maps

For Illustrative Purposes Only

Chapter 1; Figures 1 and 2; Introductory text; Graphics; Illustrative content; Other tables



Towards a Sustainable Region

This section details the policies as they relate to this Plan's triple bottom line objectives:

Chapter 2: A Sustainable Natural Environment provides direction on enhancing a linked Regional Greenlands System and the treatment of its components.

Chapter 3: Healthy Communities sets out policies to improve the health and well-being of the people who live and work in the Region by planning and developing sustainable and active communities.

Chapter 4: Economic Vitality establishes a framework to create a competitive and flexible economic environment that encourages investment and a diversity of employment opportunities.

Growth Management

This section sets a new standard for development in York Region's communities and presents a co-ordinated and integrated approach to growth management and infrastructure delivery.

Chapter 5: An Urbanizing Region: Building Cities and Complete Communities outlines the Regional Structure and provides development direction on:

- city building in Regional Centres and Corridors, linked by rapid transit
- planning for a minimum target of 40 per cent intensification in key strategic areas
- new community areas planned to a higher standard in urban design, sustainable buildings, mobility and sense of place

Chapter 6: Agricultural and Rural Areas sets out policies that preserve the rural character of many York Region communities.

Chapter 7: Servicing Our Population focuses on:

- reducing the demand for services
- mobility: pedestrian and cycling connections, transit, and streets
- efficiency and savings in water and wastewater
- composting, recycling and waste diversion
- efficient and renewable energy systems

Implementation

Chapter 8: Implementation provides direction on the implementation of the policies in this Plan with respect to public engagement, monitoring progress, clarity in review processes, and interpretation.

Using this Plan's integrated approach to growth, infrastructure, environment and community, York Region is committed to a sustainability approach in addressing its challenges and building on its successes. This includes creating jobs, protecting and enhancing natural heritage and culture, creating well-designed communities and providing quality human services.



Over the next 25 years and beyond, York Region will continue to evolve as it experiences rapid growth. By embracing change and making smarter decisions, York Region will mature into a more attractive community in which to live, work and play.

To resolve some site-specific challenges in implementation as identified through appeals to this Plan, time-limited and area-specific Minutes of Settlement have been entered into between York Region and certain appellants to this Plan. Details of these Settlements are on file with the Office of the Regional Clerk of York Region.

York Region Official Plan Sustainability Framework

